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DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
CHARLES J. KROGMEIER, DIRECTOR

An op ed piece offered by Kelly Brodie, acting superintendent, Glenwood Resource Center, and published in the Des Moines Register on Saturday, May 16, 2009, on page 13A

Here's a primer on how to interpret future news stories on the Glenwood Resource Center.

There surely will be more. As the state's largest residential care facility, Glenwood is under the watchful eye of state and federal regulators, the Iowa Legislature, the governor, watchdog groups, relatives of residents, and the media.

Uncomfortable as it may be for us, constant monitoring does produce results, and we are better for it. Still, there will be problems that make the news.

Most of the articles have given the impression that there is something wrong with service to people with mental retardation who live at Glenwood. Each succeeding story concludes with a list of things reported in previous stories, offering no perspective.

Here's my more balanced list:

- "Highest number of deaths in recent years." Mortality rates are neither predictable nor useful in measuring quality of service. Twelve GRC residents died in 2008, one more than in 2006. So far in 2009 (through May 8), only one has died. All deaths are exhaustively reviewed, both internally and by experts with no connection to Glenwood. A Department of Justice evaluation of deaths in 2008 through November concluded that there were no systemic issues of concern.
- "Medication errors." Med errors are serious. They are also rare. GRC has an aggressive non-punitive policy for staff to report errors and learn from them. From August through January, there were 110 medical error-variances compared to 1,149,325 doses, an error rate of 0.009 percent.
- "Vacationing neurologist." Glenwood is among few facilities of its kind to have a neurologist on staff. He works part time, spending half the year in Glenwood and half overseas. He uses high-tech communication methods to give advice while he is gone. The DOJ has found Glenwood to be in full compliance on neurological standards for several years.
- "Unlicensed doctors." There are no unlicensed doctors today and those hired in the past did not do the work of physicians while they pursued Iowa licenses. Faced with difficulty in recruiting medical specialists, GRC has offered positions to qualified people on the condition that they would quickly earn Iowa licenses.
- "Record fines by state regulators." Almost all of the fines against GRC are the result of self-reported errors that we have fixed. Still, these fines remind us of the continued need to improve.
- "It's expensive." No argument there, but it will be expensive to care for our residents in any setting. Of our 314 residents, more than half are profoundly retarded, three-fourths have a severe life-threatening swallowing disorder, half have a seizure

disorder, two-thirds have a mental illness, a third are completely non-ambulatory, and more than half cannot speak and thus have difficulty participating in their care.

- “Not reached DOJ standards.” Not yet, that’s true, but we’re speeding to the finish, with DOJ experts giving us ever-better marks. Our web site posts all DOJ reports, warts and all.

At Glenwood, we proudly provide outstanding care for people with enormous needs. Our doors are open for anyone to see our progress.